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BATTERY D,
FIRST RHODE ISLAND LIGHT ARTILLERY,

AT THE

BATTLE OF ANTIETAM,

SEPTEMBER 17, 1862.

BY

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BATTERY D, AT THE BATTLE OF ANTIETAM.

ALTHOUGH Battery D had a good and widespread army reputation, it was probably less known at home, here in Rhode Island, than any other of the eight batteries that formed the First Regiment Rhode Island Light Artillery, for the reason that the men composing it, having been recruited mainly from the towns of Warwick, Coventry, West Greenwich and Foster, had fewer friends in the thickly settled cities and towns, to take pride in narrating their exploits in the newspapers of the day, or to call the attention of editors to their deeds. In common with many other officers of the army, though exercising no rudeness, the commanding officer gave no encouragement to newspaper men to make notes in his camp, preferring to succeed or fail through the official record made by his superior officers, rather than to depend for reputation upon

the reports of irresponsible civilians whose kisses, it was well understood, more often were rewards for favors than otherwise.

Nearly every other battery, too, had among its members some one who acted as regular or occasional correspondent of at least one of the Providence daily papers, and who kept the doings of his particular battery before the public, while in Battery D there was not a single newspaper letter-writer. In a thorough search of the files of the *Providence Daily Journal* and the *Evening Press*, I have been unable to find a single letter from that organization, except one or two of my own, giving the names of men killed and wounded in action — nothing more.

However limited was its reputation at home, it was known in the corps of which it was a part, as one of the best of fighting batteries, and how well it merited such distinction it is the purpose of this paper to show.

While preparing the paper, I have come across the following in the *Providence Daily Journal* of September 23, 1862. The correspondent alluded to was a little mixed in his account, for there can be

no question but that Battery D was entitled to at least a part of the credit given in his story, and it is by no means strange that a mistake should be made ; in fact, it is a wonder that war correspondents, particularly at this period of the war, got their accounts so nearly accurate as they did, for during and immediately after a battle one could not tell in the confusion one division, brigade or battery from another, unless personally acquainted with the officers connected with them, for the system of flags and badges by which different commands could be designated, had not then been adopted. It will be noticed that he falls into the natural error of connecting the battery with General Green's command, or rather that he leads one to infer that it was a part of it, whereas there was no Rhode Island battery whatever attached to that division.

The article, under the head "A Rhode Island Battery in the Battle," reads :

"The correspondent of the *New York Herald* says that the Third Rhode Island Battery was in General Green's Division, better known as General Augur's. We do not know which battery is meant. It was supported by General Geary's old brigade, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Tyndale, of the Twenty-eighth

Pennsylvania Regiment, and by General Prince's old brigade, commanded by Colonel Steinrook, of the One Hundred and Ninth Pennsylvania Regiment. The letter says: 'The two brigades were at first posted as supports to the Third Rhode Island Battery. The battery was placed in position in front of a small Dunkard church. The guns, apparently without much infantry support at first, presented a tempting offer as trophies to the enemy, and consequently a large force soon advanced in splendid style, firing on the gunners, apparently determined to capture. But as they came within convenient distance, they found to their sorrow that these two brigades of General Green's had been in the meantime getting into position and had formed on a line on the right and left of the Rhode Island battery. As the rebels came from the woods in splendid style, as mentioned, they were met, not only by the galling fire of the artillery itself, but by a simultaneous fire of the infantry, which until then, was unperceived by the enemy. It is a comparatively easy undertaking for a large body of soldiers to capture a battery of artillery, however quick its fire, if undefended by infantry, because the advancing line soon shoots down the horses and the gunners, but it is quite another thing to capture guns and carry them from the field when they are well supported by infantry. And so in the present instance were those Rhode Island guns defended. The audacious rebels were driven back into the timber, where our infantry then advanced upon them, drove them out of it and occupied the woods themselves.

'The battery then wheeled to the left and poured a most destructive fire upon those retreating rebels and upon other rebel troops appearing on the left. The Twenty-seventh Indiana Regiment, which had been sent to participate in the last mentioned operation, fought fast and was compelled to retire before some of the other regiments, because the men had expended all their ammunition.

‘The Thirteenth New Jersey Regiment, which was present on a similar service, did excellent execution and remained in the woods until the command retired.

‘The rebel battery had been compelled to retire, the gunners leaving their limbers behind, and this position was held for a full hour, until, at nearly noon, the enemy came out in tremendous force in front of General Howard’s command of Sumner’s Corps, which had already got into action further to the left, and General Green’s Division being partially outflanked and subjected to a disastrous enfilading fire, was compelled to withdraw from the woods about a quarter of a mile, and did not actively participate in the battle during the remainder of the afternoon.’”

With this as a sort of preface, I will try to tell the story of Battery D at the battle of Antietam, which will describe, in its recital, more in detail what took place, so far as the artillery was concerned, at the time the correspondent speaks of.

September 13, 1862, the Army of the Potomac passed through the city of Frederick, Maryland. Lee’s army had but just left there, and we had understood that its presence had been warmly welcomed by the citizens generally. If I remember correctly, Frederick was then looked upon as a sort of hot-bed of secession in that section, the stronghold of the copperheads, and we looked forward to

our march through the city with considerable feeling of curiosity. I did not observe any special manifestations, either of joy or of disappointment, on the part of the people as we passed through, but there was displayed, on every hand, intense interest in our movement. The sidewalks of the street through which we marched were well filled with people, though by no means crowded, but the windows of the houses were thronged with eager observers.

The next day, the fourteenth, occurred the battle of South Mountain. During this action, Battery D was ordered to take position where it would be available in case of necessity. Although we were so situated as to be constantly under fire, the battery was not actually engaged at any time during the day, though firing an occasional shot; but our position was such that we had an excellent view of General Reno's movements, and we witnessed with intense satisfaction his charging lines of infantry as they made their assaults through the timber upon the enemy, who, under its protection, felt secure in his position on the mountain side.

The afternoon of the sixteenth found us in the vicinity of the field where was to take place the great battle of Antietam. The division of which Battery D formed a part, Doubleday's Division, Hooker's Corps, crossed the Antietam just before dark, and it was quite dark when we halted for the night. We struck off to the left from the road soon after crossing the stream, and marching quite a distance went into park at reduced intervals, with a number of other batteries. Our position was on cleared ground and on the summit of a commanding ridge, as we discovered the next morning. To our left and front was a heavy growth of timber, and as our infantry advanced into it to establish a picket line, a heavy skirmish took place. It had grown very dark then, and the flashes from the discharges of the small arms presented a beautiful sight. This took place but a few yards from us, and we knew that we were in the immediate presence of the enemy in force, and that by early dawn we would be struggling with him in battle on that very field. As a matter of fact, our lines were only a few yards apart, and during the night we made prisoners of

several rebel pickets who, in the darkness, stumbled upon our pickets.

The caissons, battery-wagon and forge of the battery were disposed of under cover of the hill, and quite a long distance to the rear of our bivouac. The officers' cook was directed to stay with the caissons and to bring up breakfast before daylight in the morning. The teams were not unhitched from the carriages, but the bridles of the horses were slipped, so as to give the animals a chance to feed. It was late when the horses were fed and the men had eaten their suppers. The officers contented themselves with a hasty bite that the cook brought up from the rear.

At length we were all stretched upon the ground, wrapped in our blankets, and everything was quiet except the snoring of the heavy sleepers, the munching of the horses as they ground the grain with their teeth, and the occasional firing of the pickets. At this period of the war, picket firing was very unpopular with both sides, and though the two lines might be only a little distance apart, it was not much indulged in. In the spring and early summer

of 1864, when the army marched through the Wilderness and entered upon the campaign that ended with the investment of Petersburg, the pickets made lively music whenever the lines were in close proximity, and it was seldom that the picket line was established or relieved without a number of casualties.

We were awakened before daylight by the cook, who had brought up a pail of steaming coffee, some johnny-cakes and "fixins," together with cups, plates and other table ware. A blanket was spread on the ground for a table-cloth, on which was placed the breakfast, and the officers gathered around it on their haunches. It was the early gray light that appeared just before the sun rises above the horizon, and we could little more than distinguish each other. We had not half finished our meal, but it had grown considerably lighter, and we could see the first rays of the sun lighting up the distant hilltops, when there was a sudden flash, and the air around us appeared to be alive with shot and shell from the enemy's artillery. The opposite hill seemed suddenly

to have become an active volcano, belching forth flame, smoke and scorïæ.

The first shot apparently passed directly through our little breakfast party, not more than a foot or two above the blanket, and it struck the ground only a few feet from us. Every one dropped whatever he had in his hands, and looked around the group to see whose head was missing. So suddenly did the firing commence and so rapidly did shot follow shot, I felt lost for an instant.—I never knew how the others felt,—but I at once ordered Hugh Rider, my groom, to give me my mare, who was hitched only about ten feet distant, and by the time he got her to me I had fully recovered from my surprise.

At the first flash of the rebel guns the men sprang to their posts, the drivers adjusted the horses' bridles, the cannoneers took their equipments, and the only order necessary to give was "Action front!" which was quickly executed. Gibbons' Battery, Company B, Fourth United States Artillery, was on our left; Battery L, First New York Artillery, Captain J. A. Reynolds, was on our right, as was also

Gerrish's Battery, the First New Hampshire, under command of First Lieutenant F. M. Edgell. As quickly as possible every gun, twenty-four in number, fired in reply to the enemy.

I have always thought that but one battery opened upon us, though others believe there were two or three opposed to us. Whatever number there was, they must have found their position a warm one, for the gunners of three of these (our batteries) could not be excelled for marksmanship, estimation of distances, and all the good qualities that go to make a skillful gunner. The winter previous they had been exercised by Captain Gibbon in firing at target, sighting, etc., and they had acquired great proficiency in these points, as stated in my paper, "Incidents of the War." The fuses of the shell and case were accurately timed, and the projectiles burst where it was intended that they should—among the guns and limbers of the enemy, who had stirred up a hornets' nest, and the hornets proved too many for him, for after an hour or so he ceased firing and withdrew his guns.

Soon after the firing commenced, Gibbon's battery

was ordered by General Hooker to a position in some ploughed ground in front of the wood at our left, where it was supported by General Gibbon's brigade, and before the enemy's guns in our front were silenced, Captain Reynolds' battery was ordered to take position very near to it, but two other batteries advanced to the ground that Captain Reynolds had left, so that our fire was not diminished in the least.

Being on the extreme right of our line and somewhat to the rear of it, we were not very much exposed after the artillery ceased firing, for the enemy's centre and the right of his left wing were so hotly pressed that he had neither the time nor the force to attempt the advance of his extreme left. He tried only to hold the ground that he already had possession of, and right manfully he resisted the assaults made upon him.

After the cessation of the artillery fire we had an easy time until about ten o'clock, when General Gibbon rode up to me and said: "Here, Captain; your men are good and fresh; General Hooker wants to see you." I thought it pretty cool, this reference to the fresh condition of the men, for they had had

but little sleep for several nights, and they had been hard at work since early daylight, for after working the guns they were kept busy replenishing the ammunition chests and at other necessary work ; besides, we were very short-handed, owing to heavy losses in previous actions. First directing Lieutenant Fisk to limber the pieces, I reported to General Hooker, whom I found at the point where a little while after he received the severe wound that incapacitated him for further service that day. Said he :

“ Captain, you see that cornfield ; the second one, I mean ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ You see the one beyond that ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Well, I want you to go through the second one into the ploughed ground, and into the cornfield beyond, if you can get there. Now go and look out for your support ; you will find some infantry there to support you.”

The bullets were right thick where he gave me the order, for the position was an exposed one, just such as one would expect to find General Hooker in.

On the right was the Hagerstown turnpike, leading to Sharpsburg, running southerly and parallel with the line of vision. The ground was elevated and gave a fine view of a long stretch of open land that lay between two irregular lines of timber, the easterly one on the left, fringing the hills at the base of the South Mountain range, where the Antietam coursed along on its way to the Potomac; the other at the right, on the further side of the turnpike and to the westward, more clear and more open than the other. The trunks of the trees on the right were bare of branches and foliage from ten to twenty feet or more above the ground, and the rebels were distinctly seen in all the various regular and irregular formations of a battlefield. The Dunker church was in plain sight, and down to that point our troops, apparently, had driven the enemy into or across the turnpike. As far as the church the ground appeared to be a descending plain of cultivated land, beyond which it seemed undulating and uncertain in character.

There lay before the eye two-thirds of the distance to the bridge where General Burnside had then

already commenced his heavy assaults, for the purpose of carrying the bridge and effecting a lodgement of his corps on the west of the Antietam, so as to make a junction with our centre. Over this space the two lines had been putting forth all their energies since early light, and the ground was strewn with dead and wounded horses and men, clothing, knapsacks, canteens, muskets and side arms broken and twisted in every imaginable manner. The blue and the gray were indiscriminately mingled, either motionless and lifeless, or dragging their bleeding forms along in search of some less exposed situation. And there were those whose life-blood was fast or slowly ebbing away, with only strength sufficient to raise a supplicating arm for assistance or relief. The stretcher-bearers were straining every nerve to succor the helpless wounded, but it would have required a force in itself equal to a small army to have immediately removed them all; nor would their situation have been materially improved by removal, except that they would have been carried from the midst of the noise and excitement of the field, for the hospitals were crowded to repletion, and hundreds were

waiting their turns for the care of the surgeons. Down through this field of confusion went Battery D, closely followed by Lieutenant Edgell with the First New Hampshire battery.

Unless under great excitement horses will not step on the bodies of men, either alive or dead, but when attached to a battery they may go so close as to cause further injury to the wounded or mutilation to the dead by passing the wheels over them ; so we picked our way carefully, avoiding running over the bodies strewn around on every hand, and looking out for the wounded. At one point we were moving along quite briskly, when a poor wounded fellow, clad in the dingy yellow, the "butternut," as we called it, so common to the uniforms of the rebel soldiers, with a countenance expressive of all the terror of one who expected no consideration, raised himself on one elbow and cried out, "O, don't run over me!" I said, as some of the men quickly but carefully removed him aside, "You shan't be hurt, my man," and an expression of relief and gratitude overspread his face that spoke more plainly and loudly than would have a thousand words of thanks.

We finally entered the cornfield designated by General Hooker, pushed through it and reached our advanced line. A little distance to our left and front was a brigade or division of infantry lying on the ground as if awaiting an attack. As the battery halted, a rifled projectile came tumbling through the air, which indicated that the rebel artillery was watching our movement. From the position the infantry were in, I judged there must be a strong force of the enemy in our immediate front, and questioned within myself the judiciousness of going into battery in so advanced a position. Riding to the infantry, I asked whose brigade it was, and was answered General Greene's. Looking around I saw the General approaching, and I asked him if he could support my battery. He answered in a low tone of voice that he was out of ammunition. I remember the thought coming into my mind that it was a mighty funny place for men without ammunition to be in, and that if they could hold their position with nothing in their cartridge-boxes, artillery surely ought to be able to hold theirs with limber chests

well packed and good men to work the guns, so I gave the order, "In battery "

What happened here may be best told in general terms by an extract from my official report of the part the division artillery took in the action. Captain Campbell, of Gibbon's battery, was the ranking artillery officer in the division, but he was severely wounded in the shoulder in the early part of the day, and his injury was so severe that it necessitated his removal to the hospital, and the command of the artillery consequently devolved upon me, and the report of its doings. Giving in detail the part taken by the batteries as the day progressed, the report says relative to Battery D :

"General Hooker directed the Rhode Island battery to move forward beyond the second cornfield, if practicable, and to take position as near to the woods as possible. The battery advanced, followed by Lieutenant Edgell's New Hampshire battery, to the position indicated, and went into battery about * — yards from the wood, the New Hampshire battery taking position at the left and about one hundred yards in rear. A battery of the enemy here opened on the Rhode Island battery, but no attention was paid to it, as their fire was perfectly ineffective. The Rhode Islanders

* This space is not filled in the original draft, which I retained. Probably it was so left in the draft and filled in the report after further consideration.

opened with one section upon a body of the enemy that was seen retreating just to the left of their front, and about an hundred and twenty-five yards distant, throwing them into great confusion. The other four guns opened with canister and case upon a large force advancing through the wood, which was very open, and with the assistance of the other two guns, which in a short time had accomplished their object, and the New Hampshire battery, checked the enemy, and he retired out of sight. While the Rhode Island battery was engaged in forcing back the enemy in the wood a body of sharpshooters had crept unobserved along a little ridge that ran diagonally to the battery front, and they opened a most deadly fire, killing and disabling many horses and men.

“As soon as possible a section was directed to open upon them with canister. Though this caused them no injury, as they lay down under cover of the ridge, it kept them almost silent, they firing only an occasional shot without effect. While this section was keeping the sharpshooters silent, the other four guns and the New Hampshire battery opened upon the enemy's battery that was still firing, and they soon silenced it. The Rhode Island battery was then ordered to limber to the rear. The sharpshooters took advantage of the opportunity thus afforded and opened upon the battery most briskly, killing and disabling a large number of horses.

“My own horse was pierced by six bullets, and Lieutenant Fiske's horse was also shot. On one piece all the horses but one lead horse were either killed or disabled, and the piece was drawn away by hand, by means of the prolonge. We were obliged to leave the limber, but it was subsequently recovered.

“The New Hampshire battery left at the same time, and went back to its original position. After securing to a caisson the piece belonging to the lost limber, the Rhode Island battery moved into the plot of ground between the second cornfield and the ploughed

land beyond the first cornfield, and went into battery with five guns, shelling the woods in front. After firing a short time it retired to its original position."

As soon as I found what a difficult and dangerous position we were in, I sent to General Greene a request to keep the sharpshooters down, so that we could get our guns away, but the answer came back that he could not, for want of ammunition. The cannoneers were rapidly leaving their posts on account of wounds, and the drivers were constantly employed in relieving their disabled horses.

I realized that we must get our guns away then, or leave them where they were. Not the slightest doubt arose in my mind but that the men would stick to their pieces, for at the Second Bull Run battle their nerve and steadiness were tested in a severer trial than I had ever expected to see artillerymen subjected to. Twice the enemy tried to wrest their guns from them, and in one of the attempts they got in among the cannoneers, but with a pluck that excited the highest enthusiasm among the infantry and several general officers who witnessed it, they took their guns away in safety, although

batteries both on their left and their right were abandoned on the field by the men serving with them. I knew my men, and I felt that we were making a needless sacrifice.

When the order "Limber to the rear" was given it was executed almost in the twinkling of an eye, but the men behind the ridge then had us at their mercy, and right well did they improve the time in showing the temper of it. They rose up in an unbroken line and poured their lead into us a perfect storm.

Lieutenant Parker took away four pieces with few losses, considering the fire we were under. One of Lieutenant Fiske's pieces had similar good fortune, but the other was less fortunate. As the horses made the turn to bring the limber to the trail of the piece, they seemed to melt like wax before a fire. Before a disabled horse could be disengaged from the team, another would fall. A pang of intense pain rushed over me as the thought forced itself upon my mind that the piece must be left, and the closing paragraph of a letter that I received from Governor Sprague the previous winter stood out before me as in letters of fire. He wrote :

"I am glad you speak so well for your command. We must rub out Bull Run, you know, in any action that takes place, and remember those guns must never be given up alive."

It is astonishing how much one can remember, of how much he can think and resolve upon in an incredibly short space of time. I said hurriedly: "Mr. Fiske, get some infantry, quick—I'll fix the prolonge," and away he went on his wounded horse like the wind. I turned to the piece and there were only "number eight" of the caisson, who had taken the place of the wounded gunner, and one cannoneer who had his head ducked beside the rim of one of the wheels of the carriage, supposing that he was shielding it from the bullets, but in fact he was doing nothing of the sort, for he was on the side of the wheel exposed to the enemy.

There was not a man in the company who was not perfectly familiar with every implement connected with the battery, their uses and with the prompt adjustment of them to their proper places. "Fix prolonge," I ordered. The gunner leaned over the trail to disengage the rope, but the cannoneer, hugging closer to the wheel, turned up his face and cried out, "We don't know how, sir." Spang—

spang—the bullets were hitting my mare, and as they struck her side they seemed to explode directly beneath me. Quick as thought my sword was raised over his head, and with all the energy of desperation I ordered, "Fix that prolonge, —— you!" It may seem to have been a strange place for the use of profanity: death on every side, the black fiend harvesting his victims by thousands, but the most appropriate language on such urgent occasions is that which will produce the desired effect. Many lives have been lost by the supercilious choice of polite language, when, if a little of the right kind of emphasis had been thrown in, they would have been saved.

Like lightning the cannoneer sprang to the trail, recovering in an instant his lost energies, and assisted the gunner in inserting the toggle of the prolonge. Just then Lieutenant Fiske returned with fifteen or twenty infantrymen, and the piece went to the rear amid the cheers of both friend and foe. Even our enemies arose in an unbroken line and gave us their cheers.

This was a severe ordeal for men to go through,

but from the humblest private to the commissioned officers there was no flinching. The poor private who crouched by the wheel never for a moment thought of leaving his piece without orders, and his momentary self-forgetfulness was only what may happen to the stoutest heart at the very point of some sudden emergency.

My first officer, Lieutenant George C. Harkness, was absent on sick leave on account of injuries received during the Second Bull Run battle; my second officer was off duty and took no part in the action. I had but two commissioned officers for duty, both second lieutenants—Lieutenant Stephen W. Fiske and Lieutenant Ezra K. Parker. I had the utmost confidence in Lieutenant Fiske. He had ably seconded my efforts from the day that I assumed command of the company, and in every emergency I had found him to be self-sacrificing, prompt and true as steel. As he came up with those infantrymen and relieved us from our perilous position, he seemed to me for the moment to be endowed with more than human qualities, and I could have embraced him there and then in gratitude and admiration.

My junior officer, Lieutenant Parker, and I had never understood each other, and our relations had not been of mutual confidence. He had always executed his prescribed duties, but it seemed to me he did so simply because he was so ordered by his superior officer. His position when all the officers were present for duty was a trying one to a man possessing pluck, grit and ambition. As chief of caissons his duty kept him in the immediate vicinity of the caissons, out of the way of direct harm in time of action, and his only responsibility was to keep within communicating distance and to see that the proper kind and quality of ammunition were sent forward as requisitions were made upon him from the front. A laggard would have enjoyed the position and congratulated himself upon having a soft thing, and I was uncertain as to whether or no Lieutenant Parker so considered it.

At Groveton he had executed a difficult order to blow up a disabled caisson, to prevent its falling into the hands of the enemy, under circumstances of great danger and personal peril, and at the second Bull Run he had handled his caissons with great

skill as the battery changed position from one portion of the field to another. During the march through Maryland he filled Lieutenant Harkness' place, and he had become more cheerful, apparently taking a decided interest in everything pertaining to the welfare of the command, but I was not prepared to see such consummate gallantry as he displayed on this occasion. I had always had a doubt as to what his conduct would be should we get into close quarters, but here, in one of the greatest of emergencies, he stood up to the scratch without flinching, and proved beyond question that he was thoroughly reliable. All his latent energies seemed suddenly to have awakened, and he handled the four pieces with a skill that would have put to blush many an old veteran, and he inspired the men with the same enthusiasm that he evidently felt himself. From that moment forward, I cherished for him the kindest of feelings, and had the deepest admiration for his pluck and grit.

Lieutenant Parker had halted the five pieces some distance to the rear of the position that we had been driven from, and thither we repaired with the

rescued piece, and halted to straighten out matters. My poor mare had kept on her feet through all the excitement, and she had borne me on her back thus far, but she could go no farther. Changing the saddle and bridle to the horse of one of the buglers, the bugler went to the rear with the equipments of his horse on his back.

Corporal Gray (Charles C.) who heartily enjoyed the excitement of a fight, here entered into the action on his own account. Four of his "number ones" had been picked off by the sharpshooters, and he had got thoroughly mad. Picking up a musket and stripping a nearly full cartridge-box from a dead body, he lay down and commenced firing back at the men who had inflicted so great loss upon us. His position getting rather warm, he rolled up a couple of bodies near him for breastworks, and continued his fire until his ammunition was exhausted, when he rejoined his piece.

Whipple (Benjamin N.), the artificer, came to the front here and assumed the duties of a cannoneer, acting as "number one." He might have remained at the rear with his forge, and there performed all

the duty that could have been expected of him, but he was not the man to let his comrades be sorely pressed and not lend a helping hand. His bravery cost him a severe wound across the back of one hand, and the loss of one or two fingers.

We arranged five pieces in fighting trim and went into position. Our line near the turnpike had just wavered, the field was filled with stragglers, and the utmost confusion prevailed. Men were fleeing to the rear in every direction, batteries were hastily moving in one direction and another, officers were riding hither and thither, endeavoring to check the fugitives, swearing and yelling like all possessed. I remember seeing Generals Gibbon and Griffin tearing about like mad men, though there seemed to be purpose in their madness. Our line had weakened, and if that human tide was not stayed, the day was lost. General Gibbon was one of the most accomplished artillery officers in the army, and he saw at a glance the crippled condition of Battery D. He said: "I see you are badly crippled, Captain, but you must help us out. Go into battery with four pieces," but we put in all five. Steadily the men

went at their work, and one not aware of the fact would never have supposed that they had but just emerged from a fire that could be compared only to hell itself. Discipline asserted its supremacy, however, order was established in a few minutes, and the rebels were held to the turnpike.

As soon as confidence appeared to be restored, I deemed it prudent to retire, that the men might get a breathing spell, so we returned to the position that we first occupied in the morning. During the short sleep that I had the night before, I dreamed that the action had come on, and that I lost my left leg. I was not in the least superstitious, and did not think of it until after we returned to the rear, when it struck me as a little singular that most of the bullets that had hit my mare had passed in front and rear of my left leg and close to it.

While the men were changing horses, regulating harnesses and refilling the boxes with ammunition, I sat down on the ground, under and against a good-sized tree, resting my head and back against its trunk. 'Twas then that I thought of the peculiarity of this circumstance, and instinctively drew my left

leg around farther behind the tree. I had got into a little doze, when I was awakened suddenly by a shot that must have been sent with a peculiar twist, for it dodged behind the tree I was under and struck the ground close to that apparently ill-fated left leg.

I gave up my attempt at dozing, but did not lose much, for in a little while the enemy's artillery opened from the same hill that we had driven it from in the morning, and we had the most furious cannonade that had taken place up to that time since the commencement of the rebellion. A number of batteries, either by chance or by orders, had taken position both to the right and left of Battery D, and every gun belched forth its thunder until the enemy ceased his fire, long after dark. When hungry and weary we lay down that night, our aching frames were too tired to admit of sleep, and we had but a fitful rest. The morning dawned at last, and we lay there all day, expecting to renew the attack any moment, or to be called upon to repel an attack upon us. The first thing done was to send for our limber that was still on the field where we had left it.

While waiting and talking with my officers over the occurrences of the day before, an officer came up with two or three rebel prisoners under a proper guard. The officer halted his charge and saluting, said, "Captain, do you know either of the prisoners?" I scanned their features carefully, in the endeavor to recognize the face of some old acquaintance or friend, thinking that perhaps some old chum of my boyhood days or college companion had embraced the Southern cause, and having been taken a prisoner, desired to make himself and his situation known to me, in order to secure gentler treatment than he expected; but I failed to find a lineament in either countenance with which I had ever been familiar.

I told the officer that I did not know either of them, and he was about to move on, when one of them stooped over and after fumbling a moment or so about his trousers' legs, fished from beneath the lining of his boot leg a folded piece of paper which he held towards me, saying as he did so, "Perhaps, Cap'n, you will know this." I unfolded the paper, and sure enough I did know it. When we lay at

Fredericksburg a man by the name of ———, who had been detailed from the Seventh Wisconsin Volunteers to serve with Battery D, came to me one day and asked if I would object if he could manage to get detailed upon special duty as a spy. I tried to dissuade him from the notion, but he appeared to feel that in such service he would be in his true sphere and better fulfill his mission. A few days after, I received an order from "Division Headquarters" detailing ——— upon special duty, and immediately after he presented himself with a pass which read

Head Quarters King's Division.	
<i>August 9th, 1862.</i>	
PASS	<i>John Cole</i>
<i>to Fredericksburg and through all lines, on duty for these Head Quarters and return.</i>	
BY ORDER GEN. KING,	
	<i>R. CHANDLER,</i>
	A. A. G.

I had supposed that I would never hear from the man again, but here was the identical pass that he

had shown me before leaving, and I then recognized him. The kind of uniform a man is dressed in, has a great effect upon his countenance.

I learned from him that he had either joined or was pressed into the rebel army after getting into the Confederacy, that he was able to send valuable information into our lines several times, and that he had contrived to be taken prisoner in order to rejoin his command, for he had become heartily sick of playing rebel soldier. In consideration of the perilous duty that he had performed, he was granted a furlough and allowed to go home to visit his friends.

There was considerable speculation among the men of the battery as to our execution upon the batteries opposed to us the morning and evening of the day previous, so some of them asked leave to go over to the position those batteries had occupied to see what had been the result of our fire upon them. On their return they reported that the effect of our shot had been all that was intended, for the ground was strewn with dead horses, and that a number of dead artillerymen were lying there.

Private Ross (David), accompanied by a number

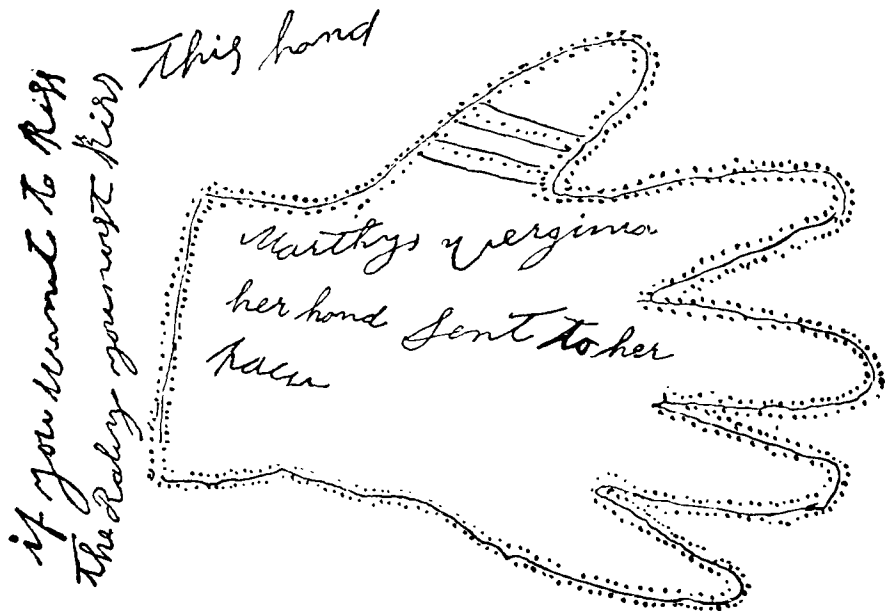
of men who had been with him to the place, brought me a letter that he found protruding from the knapsack of a dead artillerist, which had been sent to him by his wife. It was expressive of love, trust and confidence, and she was longing for the time to arrive when he would return home. A babe was born after he entered the army, and when she finished the letter in which she had told of the baby's cunning ways with all of a young mother's pride, she traced the baby's hand on the paper, by laying it on the portion unwritten upon and running a pencil around it, afterwards inking the lines with her pen. Within the hand was written: "Marthy Verginia, her hand sent to her paw," and in another place: "If you want to kiss the baby you must kiss this hand." The situation, the circumstances, the surroundings, all served to awaken emotions in the strongest and roughest hearts, even though unused to tender impulses, and this little hand so lovingly traced, reached way down into the stout soldier breasts and touched the wellsprings of pity and sympathy there, making fountains of the eyes that the trembling lids vainly endeavored to conceal,

while the quivering lips, more plainly than had they spoken in language, revealed the depth of the feeling that had been excited in their hearts.

What a subject for a painter — what a theme for a poet. The dead soldier lying there on the bare ground amid the desolation and havoc of a battle-field; the rent knapsack containing all that had contributed to his comfort, his pleasure, and solace for sacrifice of home; the letter, upon which was rudely traced his infant's hand, bearing in its tiny palm, as it were, all that it could of the strong affection cherished for and centered in him.

A group of soldiers gathered around their commanding officer—men accustomed only to the rough usages and associations of camp, inured to the privations, toils and hardships of the march; men whose finer qualities of nature, whose tenderest impulses, had long since become blunted, dulled or almost altogether obliterated by the very nature of their duties; with the wreck of battle, the results of bloody carnage surrounding them; on every side and all about them nothing but the evidences of hate, revenge and the base qualities of human

nature, made to overflow with emotion as tender, pure and sweet as ever displayed by sensitive woman. And why? None better than they knew



[Fac-simile of the tracing.]

that this was the most precious of the dead soldier's keepsakes ; none better than they knew that by the camp-fire's dim and flickering light, when all others, save the watchful sentries, were supposed to be

wrapped in slumber, the poor fellow often had taken this letter from the knapsack that pillowed his head and imprinted a loving kiss upon its page, more for the sake of the mother than the child. To them it was a symbol of a priceless and holy affection such as each knew somebody had for him. They each had something just as precious, just as dear, to them just as sacred.

I threw away the letter after cutting out the tracing. It must be borne in mind that throughout the South the common pronunciation of the contraction "pa" for papa, is "paw."

Thus the day was passed, loitering and lagging about; the hospitals were visited to administer comfort and to sympathize with friends and acquaintances who had had the misfortune to receive injuries.

Cornie Welles (Cornelius Montague Welles), of Hartford, Connecticut, an old friend of mine, came upon the field and supplied us with some delicacies from the stores of the Christian Commission with which he was connected, and he also took pains to search in the hospitals for the wounded men of Battery D, to see that they had good care and

received every comfort that the circumstances would admit of.

On the nineteenth we were ordered to move, and our march was over the turnpike that the rebels had so persistently held to on the seventeenth. The slaughter there had been fearful. The turnpike was very broad, and it must have been literally covered with dead men. They had been drawn aside from the travelled way, but only so as to leave sufficient space for the baggage wagons and the artillery to pass along. The entire space on either side of the column, between the carriages and the fences, or where the fences had been before the battle, was crowded with dead bodies, and in very many places they were piled one upon another, two and three deep. It was a sickening sight, for nearly all the faces were of African blackness, having been exposed to the sun since they fell. I do not remember how far we moved on the road, but so far as we went, the same evidence of the terrific struggle that had taken place presented itself.

When we halted, it was generally known that Lee had re-crossed the Potomac and that the great

battle was over. The enemy was fleeing with shattered columns, to a great extent barefooted or nearly so; as a resultant, according to all human reasoning, dispirited. And it was the universal expectation in the army, that we would pursue him and strike another blow while he was in a crippled condition. Great was the surprise that orders to that effect were not received.

Time disclosed the fact, however, according to the official correspondence discovered by the newspapers, that the Major-General in command of the army learned through his inspectors that the shoes of his soldiers required mending before taking another long march, and the order was not issued.

Over thirty thousand men had been killed and wounded. Including the missing, the losses amounted to nearly forty thousand, and the important advantages that might have been secured, the great results that might have been attained, all failed to become a tangible reality because, figuratively speaking, the army was not provided with a corps of cobblers.

NOTE.—The Providence Daily *Journal* was furnished by me with a list of casualties, which I copy :

“CASUALTIES IN BATTERY D.

The following is a correct list of casualties in Battery D at the late battle of Antietam :

KILLED.

Private John Galloughly,

“ John McGovern,

“ Edward Carroll,

“ John Hopkins.

WOUNDED.

Artificer Benjamin N. Whipple, bullet across the back of hand—severe wound.

Private Reuben D. Dodge, bullet through the left arm—severe wound.

Private Jeremiah Sullivan, bullet through the shoulder—severe wound.

Private Jeremiah D. Hopkins, bullet through the leg—severe wound.

Private Everett Burt, bullet through the leg—severe wound.

Private Charles Reed, bullet through the leg—severe wound.

Private Royal W. Cæsar, ankle injured by cannon ball—severe wound.

MISSING.

Private Charles A. Mulick,

“ George Bennett,

“ Frank A. Potter,

“ Isaac D. Russell,

Private Jacob J. Schmidt,

“ Duty Robbins,

“ Bernard Kilbarn,

“ David Smith, 2d.

Besides the above there were some fifteen wounded, whose injuries were slight.”

The newspaper correspondents afterwards reported Bennett and Kilbarn in hospital, wounded.

